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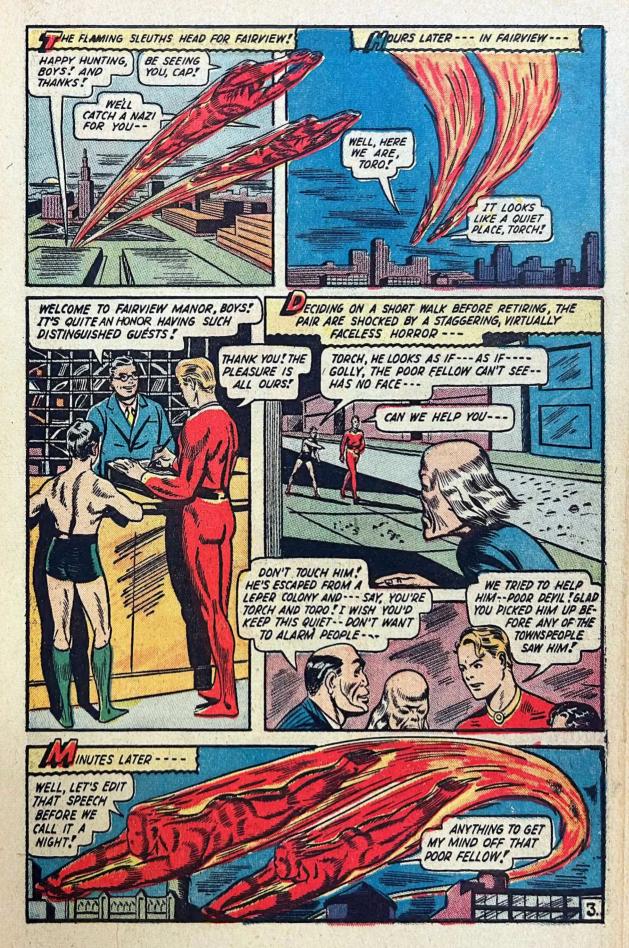


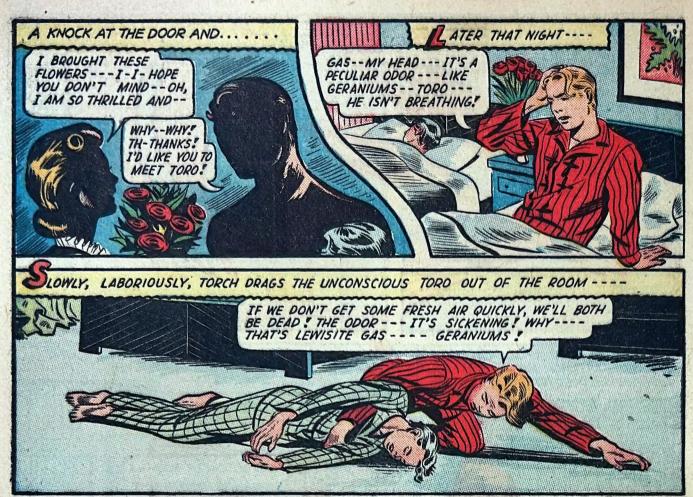
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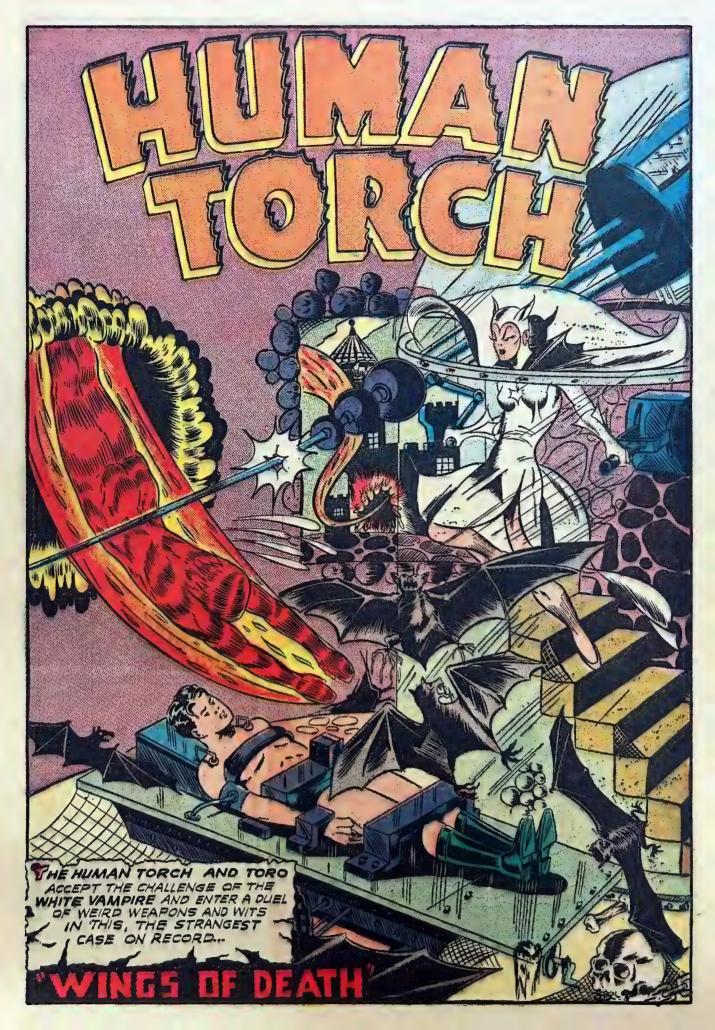
















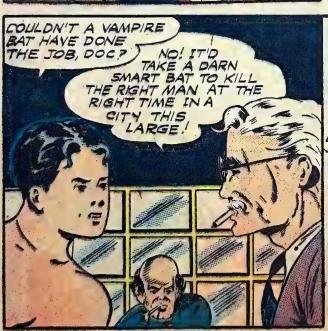






















































































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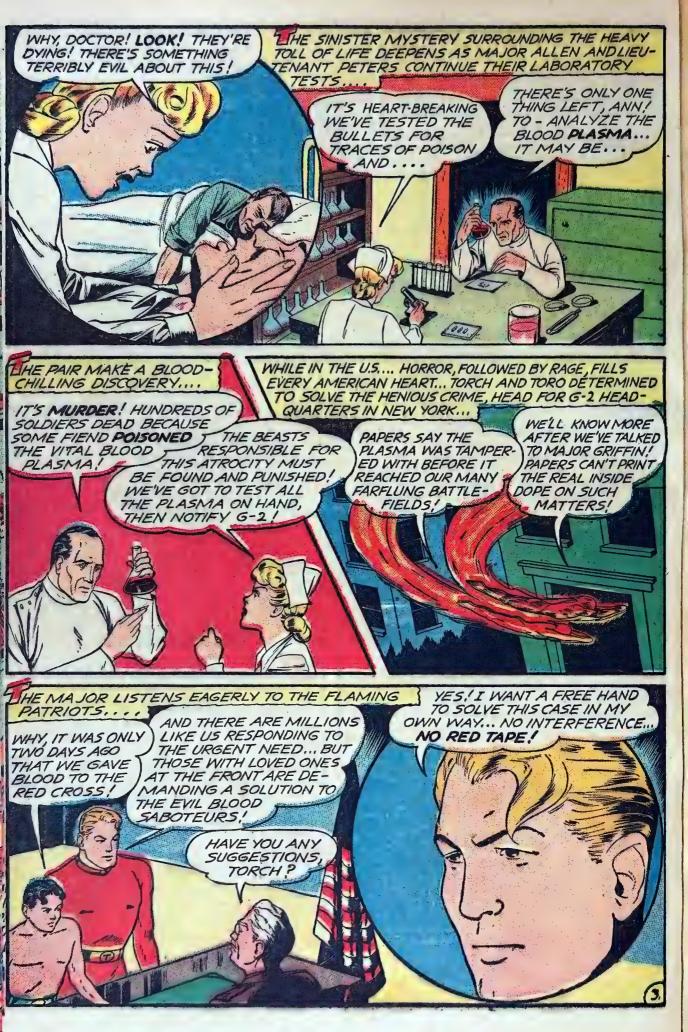
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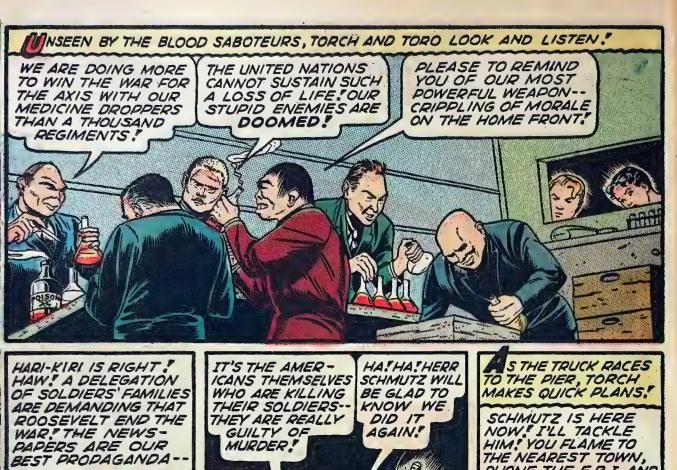
















PHONE THE F.B.I. AND
TELL THEM TO GET
HUGO BEFORE HE
UNLOADS THE PLASMA
ON THE SHIP -- AND
HURRY BACK!

SCHMUTZ
MUST BE
THE HEAD









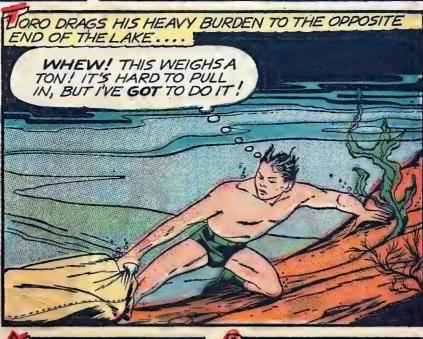




























OOKING down at the body sprawled on the floor of the paint department, Eddie Twill, senior night guard, wished he'd made more of his opportunities when he'd been on the police force. Now, here on the floor at his feet was a job that would need head-work.

It was Jackson. He had been a guard on the four to midnight trick. Eddie could see enough of the face, twisted to one side, to identify the man. Clearly it was murder. Which meant calling Captain Gleason and the police. Detective Steve Randall and the coroner and a few of the boys from Precinct No. 6 would no doubt get this kick.

Slowly, carefully, Eddie circled the bulk of the army trucks hunched up in the darkness. The smell of paint was strong. He couldn't stand it and switched on the fan on the bench. Again he circled. There seemed to be nothing out of the ordinary. Squaring his shoulders, Eddie headed for a phone. This thing would mean real work. He'd best turn in a report now.

THE lights were all on, and Eddie, standing in the draft of the big fan to avoid the fumes of paint, watched as the Captain and Detective Steve Randall talked. Steve looked over his shoulder, turned finally and approached Eddie.

"Still hanging around?" Randall's voice was heavy with amusement, his round face showing beads of sweat. "Having a little trouble?"

"Nothing we can't iron out. I haven't had a chance yet. Did you," Eddie probed, "find anything?"

"Enough." Steve Randall grinned. "It's in the bag. And the guy who pulled it will be by morning."

Thoughtfully Eddie made his way out into the yard, stood for a moment in the clean air washing his lungs deeply of the taint of paint. He moved on to where hunched up tarps of army trucks showed in the dim light. Across the field, on stilts, stood a guard's shack. Eddie circled a prime mover—

Before him, rising like a startled jackrabbit, appeared a man. Eddie leaped forward. The crush of his feet in gravel brought the rising figure around. For a brief second light gleamed upon glasses, a blacked-out face beneath the brim of a cap.

"Hold it," Eddie snarled, grabbing at the flap over the automatic he carried. "If you move—"

The man did. Before Eddie could yank the gun out, a smashing fist crushed against his chin, drove his head back till the bones cracked and pain tore down into his shoulders. His legs went soggy and he hit the ground. He heard the faint swish of feet, then, no sound at all.

Later Eddie Twill pulled himself erect. The man he'd encountered had been the killer. No doubt about it. Probably he'd escaped over the fence to the railroad tracks. There might be some means of exit. Doggedly Eddie made a careful search. He found nothing. A further search of the parked army trucks revealed no one. There had to be a way out. Which would be another black mark against the guards. Reluctantly Eddie tramped home. He should report what had happened, but he wanted time to investigate further.

THE following morning Eddie showed up at the shop. Near the time clock he encountered Captain Gleason, whose face looked disgruntled, worried. He said, "I hope Randall is wrong. He's sure Jimmy Craig is the guilty man!"

"Jim's innocent!" Eddie protested. "He had a run-in with Johnson a couple of times, but that wasn't enough to force a man to murder. Jim wouldn't do that. He's not crazy!"

"Nevertheless, he picked Jim up last night. Holding him for the murder of Johnson!"

Eddie headed away. The final round last night returned vividly. The first thing was to check the yard, find if there was any way out. Eddie checked. There was none. Later he looked the time cards over. They were all in order.

He remembered the killer had worn glasses. There were men in the shop who wore them. It could be anyone. Unobtrusively Eddie made a check of the shop. After that he dug into personnel files. Histories, however, seemed to indicate all were trusted employees.

One other point returned to Eddie for consideration. Johnson had been killed while on duty. Had he discovered someone attempting to destroy the big installation? If so, the first attempt had failed. Might there be a second?

It was night again and Eddie let himself into the shop. He'd made doubly sure guards were posted at all entrances. Now he moved forward. He'd made a thorough search first, and

"Hold it!" The voice was sullen, harsh. "I know what you're looking for. I got wise this afternoon. I knew you had an eye on me!"

A hand flipped Eddie's gun from the holster. He took a chance, looked around. It was Chris Blane. He said, "You've got your man. Now what?"

"What'd you bump Johnson off for?"

"Same reason I'm going to give you the works. He knew about me. This time I'll finish my business here, too!"

"Business?" Eddie's throat was dry.

"Sure. This is one of the biggest repair shops in the country. The equipment is worth a small fortune. Only . . . it won't be after tonight! I'm getting a nice slice of dough for this job!"

"Your country-"

Blane laughed. "My country! It never paid dough like I'm getting. Besides, it isn't my country. I've lived here years, but that doesn't change anything! This is my job. Helping American industry. I'm doing my job. Very well!"

Eddie Twill moved restlessly. Blane was a traitor of the worst kind. Probably a naturalized citizen, dangerous, clever . . . trusted!

Blane moved and Eddie saw his glasses reflect the faint light. "You noticed my glasses from last night, but how come you were sure it

"You were awake all night," Eddie explained. "You punched your card this morning, but you'd been here all the time. When I saw your face I knew you'd had no sleep."

"Smart. Okay. We'll start in the paint shop. You lead the way. There's plenty of stuff around that'll burn. Paint and thinner on the bench. Soak everything good. Start here. Hustle!"

Slowly Eddie moved forward. The heavy stench of paint struck him. He crossed to the bench, snapped on the fan. "Can't stand the smell-"

"You won't have to long. Get started. Open those cans on the bench."

Slowly Eddie pried the top off one. Blane was close, had his gun ready. Eddie half turned, stepped aside.

Swiftly he up-ended the can of paint over the fan. There was a sharp, splattering sound, and the faint hum of the fan throttled to a roar.

Instantly Eddie spun. Paint was everywhere. It had all but concealed Blane. The killer screamed and the gun in his hand blasted. But Eddie had moved. Fast.

Now he hurled himself forward. Blane grab-

bed at his glasses. Eddie drove a stiff jab in. Blane's head snapped back, the gun spun from

His knees gave way. Eddie smashed again, driving Blane's head against the side of the truck. Blane sagged, slid to the floor and lay still.

Eddie Twill finished tying his prisoner and stood looking down, a faint grin on his paintspattered face. He imagined he must look like some sort of clown . . . or maybe as if he were getting green measles.

All of which didn't matter. He'd got Blane. And he'd cleared Jimmy Craig and beat Randall to the punch. For once. Smiling, Eddie walked out to the phone booth. He'd get the Captain down here and . . . Randall. Randall would have to be in on this. THE END

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., BEQUIRED BY THE ACTS OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AND MARCH 3, 1923

BEQUIRED BY THE ACTS OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AND MARCH 3, 1923 of The Human Torch published quarterly at Meriden, Conn., for October 1, 1943. State of New York | 88.

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Martin Goodman, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the Human Torch Comics and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Fostal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

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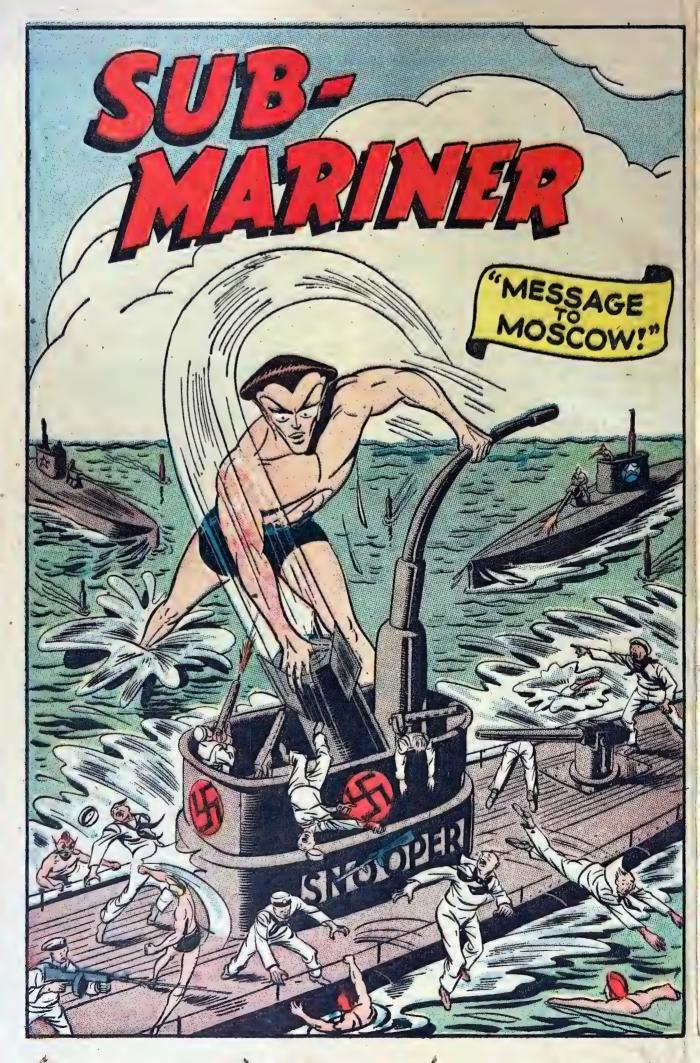
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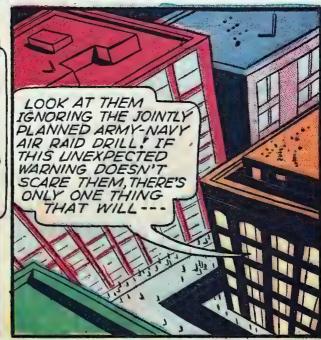
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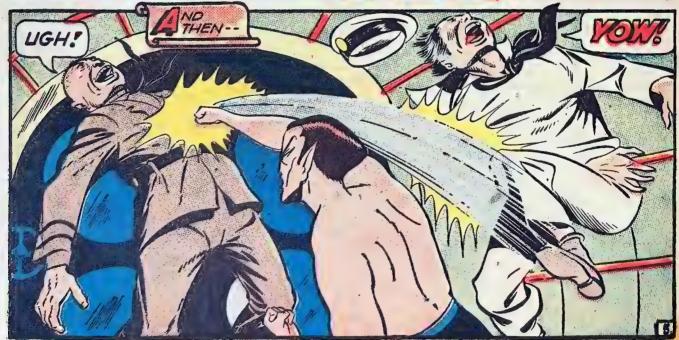
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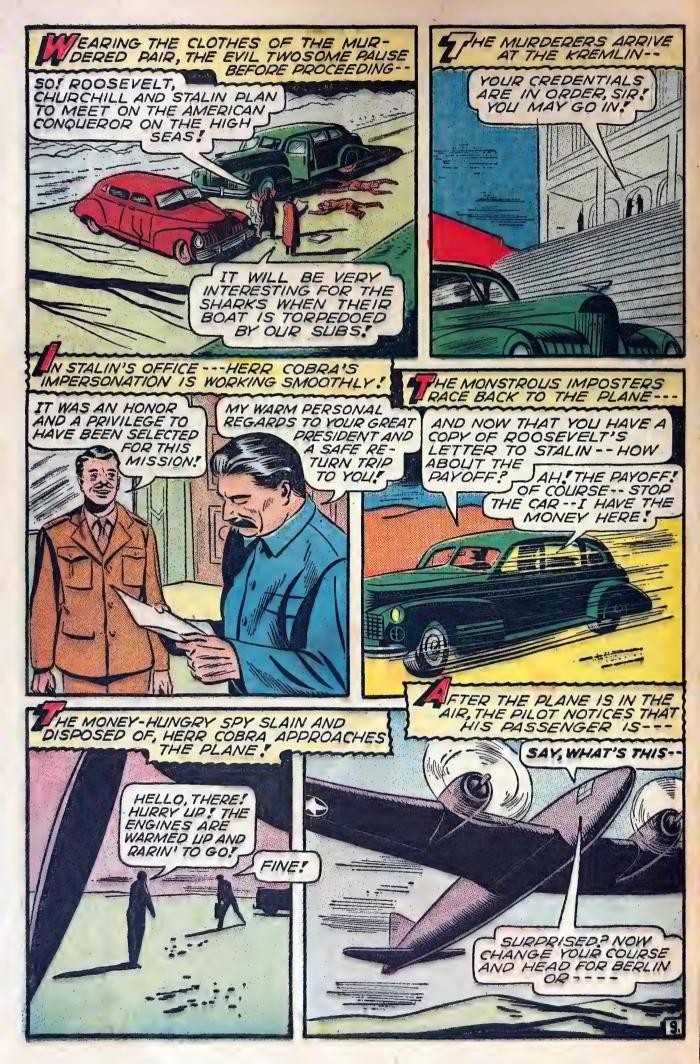




























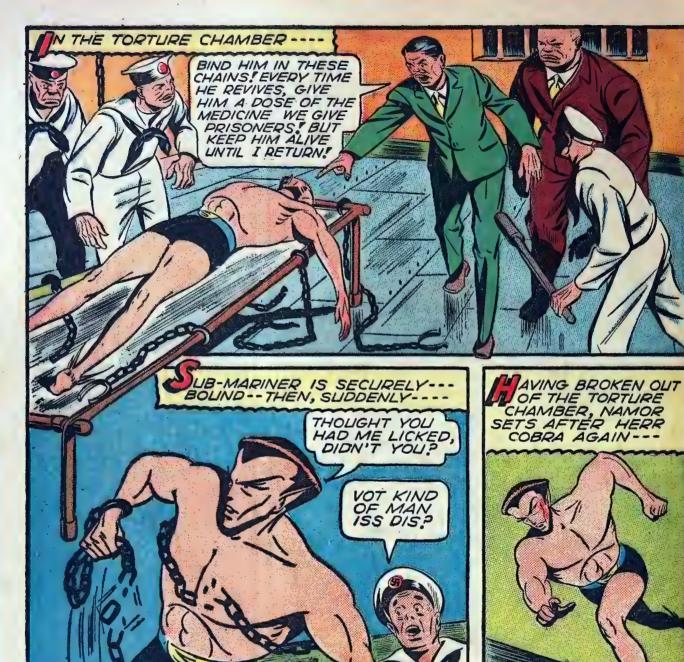


















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